OFFICE OF THE

Auditor General of British Columbia

Sustaining Results: A Framework for Developing Capacity in an Educational Setting

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Preface

Our intent in publishing this framework is to raise awareness of the need to focus on ways to *continually develop the skills and abilities of people* in the public sector in six fundamental areas of capacity—leadership, collaboration, review, planning, resourcing and professional learning—as a means of improving and sustaining results.

We are not suggesting that these areas of capacity are original or novel. In fact, the importance of developing capacity in these areas has been documented in countless ways, in a range of different terms and language, and across many different disciplines. What we offer that is unique is a process for ongoing development of these areas of capacity: a process that integrates the development of the six areas of capacity through ongoing *awareness, exploring, practising* and *reflecting*.

We present the framework in the context of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) public education system. This system has undergone significant change over the past few years, requiring that people in the system be capable of managing this shift effectively. This change in the education system is representative of that occurring across the public sector and its organizations. The framework, we believe, can therefore be used or applied to any organization that is seeking to continually develop the abilities of its people as a means of sustaining results.

As our Office moves forward in its work to enhance public sector accountability and performance, we encourage the public sector to recognize the importance of developing capacity to sustain results, and to integrate the concepts we present here into its planning, monitoring and reporting activities. We invite your comments on the framework and its potential value. Please email us at:

comments@bcauditor.com

or contact us in writing at:

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Introduction

Providing legislators and the public with advice and assessments of how well government is performing is at the heart of our Office's mandate. Over the years, our work in this area has focused on enhancing government accountability, strengthening performance reporting, improving management performance and results, and encouraging the development of the public sector workforce and its working environment. As part of this, we have frequently highlighted the need for government to address organizational capacity. For example, in our 1997 report, *Enhancing Accountability for Performance*, issued jointly with the Deputy Ministers' Council, we stressed that developing organizational capacity should be attended to and that public sector organizations should provide the public with assurances that they are monitoring and developing that capacity. And, in our 2005 report, *Building Momentum for Results-based Management*, we again raise the importance of having in place adequate capacity as a condition for effective implementation of results-based management.

One of the themes that repeatedly surfaces in all of this work is the critical role that the capacity of people—their skills and abilities—plays in enabling governments and their organizations to achieve results and continually improve. Insufficient capacity and inadequate attention to its development places the provincial public sector at risk of not being able to achieve its goals. We therefore felt it was important to consider what advice we could offer the provincial public sector as it works toward ensuring that the skills and abilities of its people are being sufficiently developed.

> Capacity is the "ability of individuals and organizations to perform specific functions or meet intended objectives effectively, efficiently and sustainably." (UNDP, 1998)

Capacity is the ability to do something and do it well over a long period of time. Having the ability to get something done requires resources (money, people, assets, equipment, infrastructure, systems), processes, procedures, skills, and knowledge. And, getting things done happens at the individual level, the organizational level, or at a broader system-wide level. In this paper we do not attempt to look at all of these dimensions of capacity. Instead, we focus on the development of one specific and critical dimension of capacity —the skills and abilities of people.

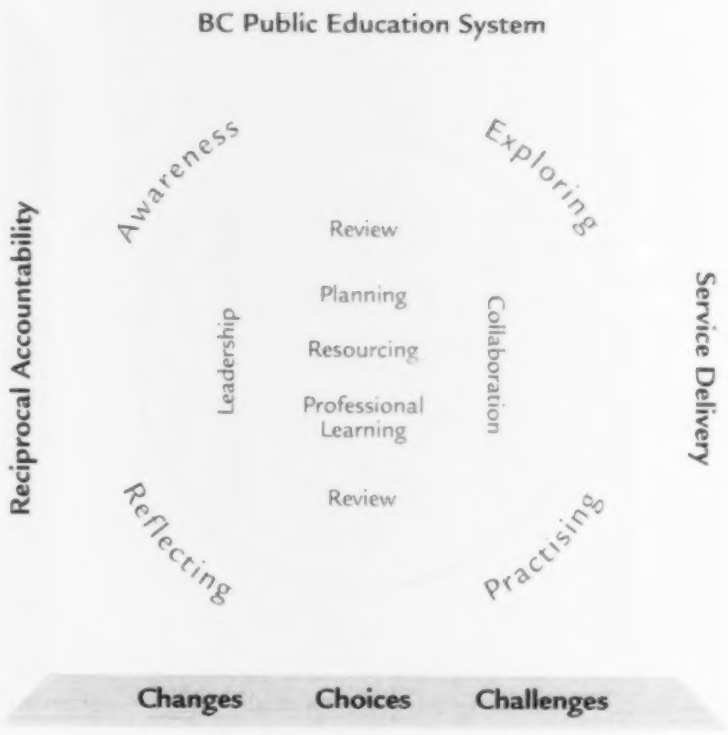
The skills and abilities needed by people to get a job done successfully, of course, vary widely depending on the task at hand.

However, after conducting an extensive review of literature and research, we have found that there are six fundamental areas that people need to develop well if an organization is to sustain improvement. Those areas are leadership, collaboration, review, planning, resourcing and professional learning. And in our view, developing these skills and abilities in an ongoing process of awareness, exploring, practising and reflecting is one approach that the provincial public sector can take to ensure that sufficient capacity is in place to achieve results now and in the future. Exhibit 1 illustrates this framework we are proposing.

We will continue, in the work of our Office, to make connections to the importance of developing capacity, particularly in the education sector where educators, stewards and governors of the system are striving to sustain improvement in student achievement in an environment of constant change. Ongoing attention to capacity development will, we believe, support the education system in serving the students of our province well.

Exhibit 1

Framework for developing capacity



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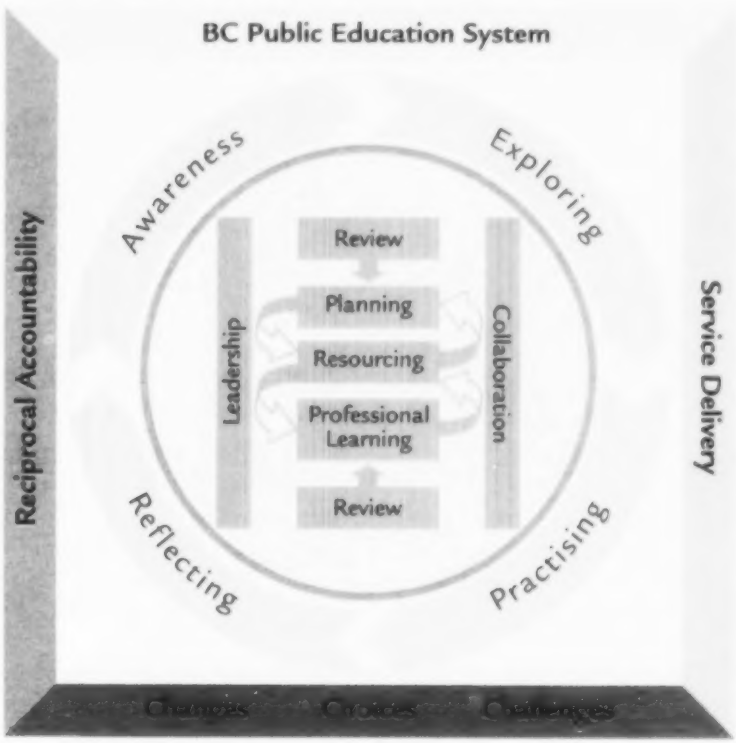


Why focus on capacity development?

. . . to manage change

Organizations need to be able to respond readily to change without setting back their efforts to enhance performance and sustain improvement in results. Some changes can be easily adapted to; others require people to make fundamental shifts in the way they approach their work. And when change is intended to result in a very different future state (transformational change), organizations need to focus on continually developing the skills and abilities of their people to meet emerging needs. In recognition of this, organizations are becoming increasingly aware that a proactive approach to developing the skills and abilities of their people places the organizations in a far better position to manage change effectively and to respond successfully to new exposures to risk.

. . . to manage for results

Over the past decade, public sector organizations have been encouraged to expand their thinking about process and program implementation to address results—the outputs, efficiency and outcomes that are valued by the public. In our report *Building Momentum for Results-based Management* we emphasize that capacity is critical to successfully implement results-based management and support the shift in culture that this entails. Having people with the necessary skills and abilities to facilitate this change is essential for successfully embedding a culture that supports this new direction.

. . . to achieve results

Capacity development is essential for achieving results and for sustaining improvement. Achieving results requires a certain level of capacity and sustaining improvement over time requires that an organization's capacity be continually monitored and developed. And, as attaining higher levels of achievement becomes increasingly difficult to do, ensuring that the necessary skills and abilities are being developed becomes even more critical.

. . . to enhance accountability

Reporting on performance to the public and to the legislators in a way that clearly shows what was intended to be achieved and what was actually achieved is a key component to meeting public expectations of an open, transparent and accountable government. Enhanced accountability places new demands on staff in the public sector, requiring them to assume new roles and responsibilities in responding to increased autonomy and decentralized decision-making. Meeting these expectations requires developing the skills and abilities of people to plan, set performance targets, choose measures, monitor and evaluate progress, and report on results.

Why focus on capacity development in our public education system?

British Columbians have come to expect the province's public K–12 education system—including the ministry, school boards and schools—to be transparent, accountable and dedicated to improving student learning and achievement. And the people in the education system believe that these are critical objectives to pursue.

Students in British Columbia have historically performed well compared with their peers across the country and abroad. But continuing to meet the objective of improving student achievement in a transparent and accountable way in times of constant change is not easy. Over the past few years, both the pace and extent of change in the province's public education system have been greater than ever before. Much of this change is the result of the Legislative Assembly's revision of the School Act and the introduction of new policies. These changes are having a major effect on how the K–12 system operates and how it must account for its results. Key changes include:

- focusing decision-making on maintaining and improving student achievement;
- providing school boards more autonomy and choice in how they use resources under their control;
- providing greater flexibility and choice in student learning programs;
- encouraging greater parental involvement in the school community and decision-making;

- introducing a new funding formula to provide a simpler, more transparent basis of funding; and
- enhancing accountability by introducing accountability contracts, school planning councils and district reviews to document and track school performance.

The public and legislators expect that those entrusted with governing and delivering education in British Columbia will use public funds to achieve the best possible benefit for students, demonstrate accountability for results and strive for continual improvement regardless of the changes creating challenges in facing the education system. The public also expects that the people within the education system will have the necessary capacity—skills and abilities—to do so effectively, efficiently and sustainably.

What areas of capacity should be developed?

While there are many dimensions of capacity that enable organizations to do things well, our focus in this paper is on one critical dimension—the skills and abilities of people. We explore this aspect in the context of the K-12 education system.

The job of delivering education to our children well requires that people within the system have a multitude of both general and specific skills and abilities. Teachers, support staff, administrators and governors all have different roles to play, each requiring specific professional and technical competencies. For example, teachers need to have strong skills in developing instructional strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of their students, while secretary-treasurers need to have a solid understanding of financial management. At the same time, the success of the education system as a whole requires that all people in the system use more general skills and abilities such as communicating, working effectively with others, and maintaining positive relations within the education community. Our focus in this proposed framework is on developing these more general areas of skill and ability.

In assessing which abilities to focus on, we reviewed literature and research from a variety of fields including performance management, accountability, change management, organizational learning, risk management, capacity development, school effectiveness, and education reform (refer to Appendix 1 A for

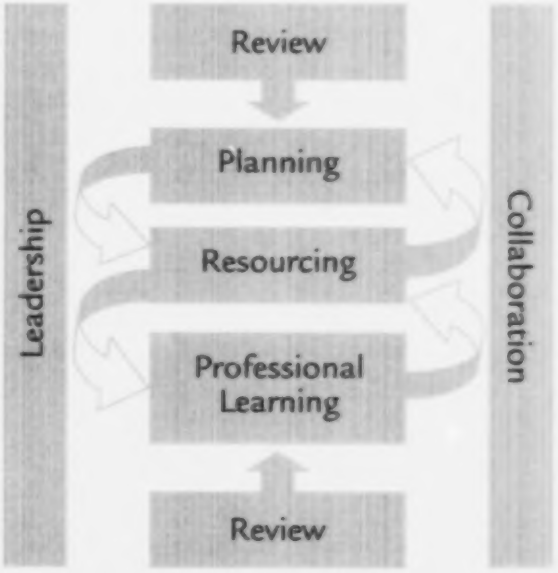
a list of key sources used). We concluded that the following six critical abilities call for the greatest focus as they repeatedly surfaced in the literature as key to sustaining improvement:

1. Leadership – ability to foster a culture to continually improve
2. Collaboration – ability to work together toward a common vision
3. Review – ability to determine needs, measure success and use information
4. Planning – ability to create coherent plans connected to goals, strategies and resources
5. Resourcing – ability to align time, money and people to achieve results
6. Professional learning – ability to continually learn and share knowledge

We describe these in more detail below. The relationship between each of these areas is shown in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2

Six areas for capacity development



1. Leadership – ability to foster a culture to continually improve

> "Change is a leader's friend, but it has a split personality: its nonlinear messiness gets us into trouble."
>
> *Michael Fullan*

The ability to continually develop and demonstrate good leadership is key to an organization's success in managing change, managing risks and sustaining results over the long term.

Organizations are recognizing that not only must they develop future leaders but also that they must instil a different kind of leadership in their people—one that incorporates new values. Many have suggested that for organizations to be successful today, they need a wider range of leadership values than those associated with a traditional "command and control." Peter Senge (2000) suggests that these leadership values should promote:

Engagement: The ability to mobilize people to tackle tough problems;

Systems thinking The ability to recognize the hidden dynamics of complex systems and to find leverage;

Leading learning: The ability to model a "learner-centered" as opposed to an "authority-centered" approach to all problems; and

Self-awareness: The ability to reflect and develop new and existing personal and professional values and vision.

In the expanded view of leadership, leaders see change as an opportunity to learn. They are freed from the unrealistic expectation that they are to appear as the most knowledgeable people in every situation. Leadership is also seen to be shared among many participants who take a collaborative approach and responsibility for problem-solving and planning. The leader in this role acts as facilitator, mentor and guide. With this new view, the skills and competencies required of leaders and team members are more complex, and developing them takes time, effort and support.

The need to develop leadership is not news to educators and educationai researchers. They have focused on leadership development through a variety of initiatives for several years. However, with the pace of change in roles and responsibilities and enhanced accountability with increased public scrutiny, this focus on developing leadership is taking on a heightened sense of urgency.

2. Collaboration – ability to work together toward a common vision

> "I not only use all the brains I have, but all I can borrow."
>
> *Woodrow Wilson*

More and more organizations are realizing the importance of bringing people together to work toward a common goal. Managing and implementing change that is intended to create a very different future state in an organization requires individual and collective commitment of all people within the organization. Therefore having the skills and abilities in place to foster collaboration is key to creating a common vision and working together toward a common goal.

Collaboration is at the heart of learning and the sharing of knowledge. And at the very root of learning lies the premise that active participation enhances meaning and the construction of new knowledge. Much literature in the field of education emphasizes the importance of collaboration in improving student achievement. And developing the ability to support collaboration within and across the education system provides opportunities for people to gain the shared knowledge and understanding that is necessary to create and build upon a collective vision. By working together toward a common vision, those in the education system can generate new ideas, create group cohesion around a shared purpose, and foster a learning organization.

Creating and sustaining collaborative communities takes motivation and willingness on the part of individuals. Enabling supports need to be in place to cultivate individual motivation so that communities of individuals with common interests can begin to form. A start to cultivating a collective motivation within a community is to bring people together to discuss issues around the common goal of improving student success.

Good leadership and effective resourcing can mobilize and engage people, providing support and time for fostering communities of shared inquiry. And for collaboration to be successful people must feel that it is a legitimate work activity that will yield significant benefits now and in the future. Genuine collaboration increases the effectiveness of the planning and review processes and fosters the development of skills and abilities in the areas of leadership, resourcing and professional learning.

3. Review – ability to determine needs, measure success and use information

> "Today's education leader—whether the leader of the school district, the school building or the classroom—must change data into knowledge, transform knowledge into wisdom, and use wisdom as a guide to action."
>
> *The Doyle Report*

Managing to continually improve results requires careful and sophisticated evidence-gathering and analysis. Qualitative and quantitative sources of data need to be collected, stored, managed and turned into knowledge that can be used to adjust present practices in ways that will likely improve results. Basically, review is about two things:

- using multiple sources of literature, evidence and information to assess needs, develop plans and identify measures of success; and
- using information about results or performance to learn and inform future planning.

Reviewing provides information for discussion and action and enables organizations to make informed decisions about refinements that should be made to plans or strategies. Conducting effective reviews and using the information they generate requires that people know what data and information is useful and that they create the processes, tools, techniques and opportunities to access it. Once this is done, the ability to analyze the data and draw meaning from it needs to be developed. Reviewing in a collaborative way also encourages joint reflection on the effectiveness of processes and outcomes, enhances learning, and fosters the building of a shared vision. Successfully sharing the knowledge gained, incorporating it into planning and reporting on results achieved depends on people having the skills and abilities to do these things well.

In the education system there is an overwhelming amount of data to draw on. Uncertain, however, is whether it is the right data and whether it is being used in a way that best informs decision-making. Improving student achievement "for all" requires disaggregating the layers of data in new ways to gain insights into how best to narrow the gaps in student achievement. Whether it is labelled review, assessment, inquiry, reflection, or data-driven dialogue, it's all about the same thing—learning what needs to be done, measuring how well it worked and learning how to do it better. (Or, in the language of educators, it's about assessment of learning for learning). To perform such review requires skills and abilities embedded at all levels in the education system—from the ministry and school boards through to district and school staff.

4. Planning – ability to create coherent plans connected to goals, strategies and resources

> "I wake up every morning determined both to change the world and have one hell of a good time. Sometimes this makes planning the day a little difficult."
>
> *E.B White*

With increasing demands for transparency and accountability, the public sector is having to place greater focus on strengthening planning processes and practices to ensure the intended results are achieved. And having in place effective planning processes is key to implementing results-based management. To shift planning practices from merely a paper exercise to an activity that provides a meaningful, relevant and realistic road map to achieving results requires organizations to develop the planning abilities of its people.

The first step is to instil purpose, relevance, and meaning for planning needs. The literature suggests that the traditional planning practice of implementing many disconnected initiatives is less effective than if initiatives were thoughtfully connected to the vision or overall goals of the organization. Engaging others in the planning process is fundamental to creating this connection and increases a sense of shared vision and purpose. Leadership skills and the ability to use information to inform planning also become essential ingredients.

In the education system, administrators and educators at all levels are being asked to produce meaningful, integrated, relevant plans for improving student learning and achievement—and to produce them collaboratively. Doing this requires creating a plan or road map based on a variety of assessments, evidence, information and reflection on previous results. The road map continually evolves through learning from review before planning and learning from review when monitoring results. Sound processes for evaluating risks and the likely impact of potential strategic alternatives on achieving intended results must also be in place. Meaningful planning is more likely to be realized if all participants can clearly connect their contributions to student learning and achievement; if strategies and initiatives are clearly connected to overall system goals and aligned with resources; and if plans are based on the local context and draw input from educators, parents, students and the community.

5. Resourcing – ability to align time, money and people to achieve results

> "Choice is our starting point, constant companion, and heaviest burden."
>
> *Philip Stokes*

Using public funds in the best possible way for system improvement requires that the public sector has people with the ability to effectively allocate money, people and time. Resources required to meet intended results need to be identified and communicated through clearly aligned plans. And with public expectations for enhanced accountability and transparency, government and its organizations are expected to demonstrate that public funds are being used effectively and efficiently in achieving desired results. As more and more decision-making is being devolved throughout government, those who are now responsible and accountable for planning and allocating resources need to develop or enhance their skills and abilities to effectively do so.

In the K–12 public education system, making effective choices in allocating and managing resources has become more complex in recent years and for some staff it has become a new responsibility. In the past, funding from the Ministry of Education to school districts was targeted to be spent in specific areas, and the ministry prescribed many education initiatives and programs. Now, with the elimination of most targeted school district funding and increased autonomy, school boards are to allocate funds and implement district initiatives reflective of their diverse student and community needs. At the same time, the introduction of accountability for reporting on outcomes and results means those decisions are open to public scrutiny as never before. Enhancing the skills and abilities of people to use performance information effectively is therefore critical in helping them make the best resource allocation decisions for all students and, ultimately to retain public confidence in the education system.

Developing the capacity to ensure that the best decisions are made relies on the integration of leadership, collaboration, review, planning, and professional learning capacity. For example, a rigorous review process informs planning and supports resourcing priorities required to effectively implement plans. Furthermore, "lessons learned" by reviewing resourcing decisions provides the food for thought in collaborative discussions about ways of improving student success. And effective collaboration practices can facilitate resourcing decisions as more people become engaged and responsible for decision-making.

6. Professional learning – ability to continually learn and share knowledge

> "The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change."
>
> *Carl Rogers*

Continually striving for improved results is essentially all about learning—learning by practising, learning through review and reflection, and creating networks for sharing new knowledge. Organizations today are embracing the concepts of organizational learning as they begin to realize that the pace of change in society is giving them little choice if they are to remain effective.

In the context of the education system, research has consistently concluded that the best way to improve student learning and achievement is through teacher development. However, an emerging body of literature is suggesting that professional development needs to focus less on short-term training for current initiatives and more on building a long-term view of professional learning. This would facilitate the movement toward developing shared responsibility and reciprocal accountability for improving results.

Our literature review suggested that developing the capacity needed to shift thinking from short-term professional development to long-term professional learning requires that learning opportunities be: connected to planned goals and objectives; grounded in evidence-based research and individual experience; reinforced through collaboration and shared understanding; supported by adequate allocation of resources; and modeled and supported by master teachers and other educational leaders. The literature also suggests that making this shift will challenge the education system, as the history of isolated professional practice has limited the facilitation of a collaborative approach to knowledge sharing and inquiry.

Moving from a focus on professional development to one of professional learning requires support from all of the other areas discussed. It needs to be driven by individual and collective motivation to work toward fostering a culture for collaborative, meaningful learning. Many educational leaders are acknowledging the need to make this shift and are advocating the concept of "professional learning communities" as one approach to changing the current situation. The aim of these learning communities is to bring educators together to review and discuss information and to collaboratively develop new plans and approaches to curriculum instruction, learning and assessment. Positioning professional development within the actual teaching and learning environment will, educational leaders believe, result in improved instructional practice.

How can capacity be developed?

Having an effective process in place to develop the six areas just described is essential for sustaining results. Ideally, the process will eventually become internalized and ongoing learning and improvement in each area will become a routine part of daily practice. In this section we suggest a process for developing all six areas, as shown in Exhibit 3.

Developing capacity involves building or strengthening existing abilities of individuals and organizations. It also focuses on retaining individuals and improving how their related skills and abilities are deployed within any given environment or context. It is a comprehensive, iterative process that can take place in many different ways: it can be developed informally, through learning by doing, observing, sharing experiences and/or participating in program implementation; or it can be developed more formally, with a process that focuses on specific areas of development.

Exhibit 3

Process for developing areas of capacity

Developing the skills and abilities of people happens gradually—with the process being as important as the outcome. Assessing what needs to be developed, implementing plans, and monitoring and evaluating the results of the plans all provide opportunities to enhance capacity.

The process we propose consists of four elements:

Awareness	of the need and importance of developing capacity
Exploring	to inform and support planning and measurement of capacity development
Practising	resourcing, implementing and tracking plans or strategies to develop capacity
Reflecting	reviewing and evaluating results of plans implemented to gain new understanding of capacity development needs

The process of awareness, exploring, practising and reflecting is not necessarily a linear one. For example, reflecting on practices or programs implemented can generate new awareness and new innovations for implementation of other capacity development strategies. And, as practising occurs, more and more people become engaged in the need to develop capacity, which in turn generates a deeper, more widespread recognition or awareness of its importance. The process is a continual one and feeds on itself.

Awareness – of the need and importance of developing capacity

1. Is there widespread recognition of the importance of developing capacity?
2. Have commitments been made to enhance capacity?
3. Have resources been committed to explore and create processes to support capacity development?

Without a broad recognition that the capacity of people needs to be developed, genuine efforts to change and do things differently are unlikely to occur. Translating awareness into action requires commitment and resources. The new awareness that is gained through doing, learning and reflecting helps keep the momentum for capacity development going by continually feeding the process.

Exploring – to inform and support planning and measurement of capacity development

1. Are literature, evidence and information from reviews and the local environment used to inform what specific skills and abilities need to be developed?
2. Are assessments conducted to identify gaps in capacity and to determine what needs to be enhanced?
3. Have plans to develop capacity been created, or have strategies to enhance capacity been included in other plans?
4. Have measures to assess the effectiveness of plans or strategies been identified?

Exploring involves investigating what needs to be done in terms of developing capacity. Using information from a variety of sources (including what has been learned through practising and reflecting) helps an organization identify and support development goals. In the context of the educational environment, significant changes in processes or trends also need to be assessed to determine their potential impact on capacity development. Identifying gaps between existing capacity and what is needed is key to determining the critical aspects that need development.

Assessments done during exploration are key to informing and formulating coherent and cohesive plans. Determining how best to assess the effectiveness of one's efforts to develop capacity is another significant aspect of the exploring phase.

Practising – resourcing, implementing and tracking plans or strategies to develop capacity

1. Have sufficient resources been allocated to implement plans or strategies to develop capacity?
2. Have the plans or strategies been implemented?
3. Is data being gathered to measure effectiveness of the plans implemented?
4. Are staff collaboratively engaged in ongoing development of capacity?

Practising is the "doing" or the implementing of plans and strategies to enhance skills and abilities. The work done exploring and assessing supports this stage. For plans to be implemented successfully however, appropriate resources need to be allocated, and structures and skills need to be in place to measure the effectiveness of the capacity development plans. The more that people become engaged and collaboratively work on capacity development, the greater the likelihood that the process will become embedded and sustaining.

Reflecting – reviewing and evaluating results of plans implemented to gain new understanding of capacity development needs

1. Is data gathered to measure effectiveness of implemented strategies being critically analyzed?
2. Are results of capacity development efforts incorporated in results reporting?
3. Do review and dialogue of intended versus actual results of capacity development take place regularly?
4. Is new awareness of needs for developing capacity being created and used as a result of collaborative reflection?

Taking the necessary time to reflect on the results of one's efforts to develop capacity is critical. The point is to critically analyze data that has been gathered on the effectiveness of strategies implemented. Reviewing the results achieved (and the reasons why results were not achieved) should stimulate a dialogue about what further work needs to be done or where capacity needs further enhancement. Through this dialogue and critical thinking, new awareness and understanding are generated and a culture for continual learning and improvement is supported. This collaborative reflection also encourages innovation and supports a climate of professional learning.

Bringing it all together

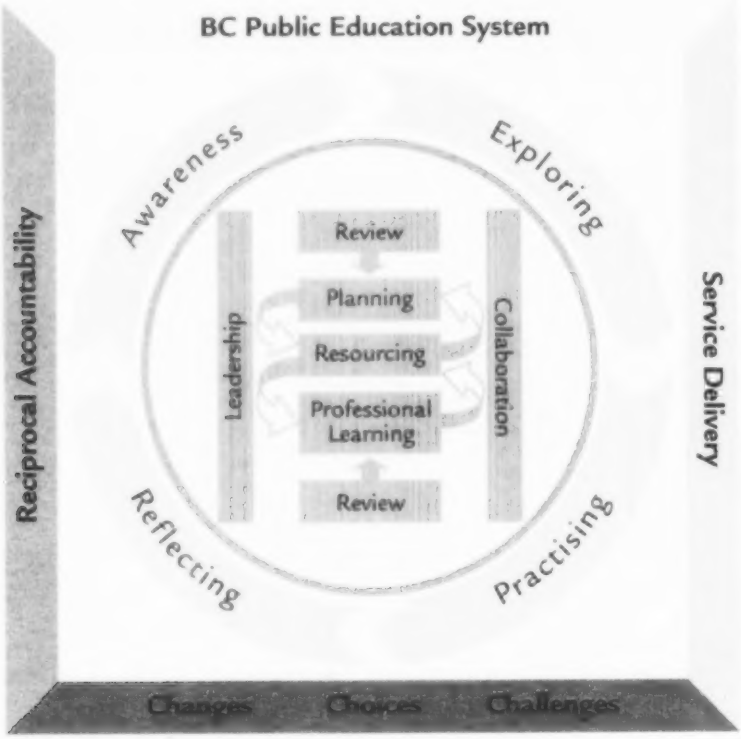
We have presented six key areas of capacity relating to skills and abilities of people that we believe organizations need to develop. We have also presented a simple process for doing so (awareness, exploring, practising and reflecting) which provides an effective balance of both informal and formal development approaches. Exhibit 4 shows the six areas that should be developed, the process for developing them, and the environment (the frame) in which the two must interact.

Capacity development in one area enhances that in other areas. For example, as progress is made in developing leadership, new knowledge gained through practice and reflection supports efforts to instil collaborative practice. In the process of developing skills and abilities in reviewing, the analysis of results provides new insights that support the development of planning and resourcing abilities, and promotes collaboration and professional learning.

The context of both the education system and the local community being served must be considered when plans for developing specific skills and abilities are being made. Influences are exerted by the environment the education system is operating in, the accountabilities and responsibilities within the system, and the results that are to be achieved (service delivery). And in the education system there are many players involved, all taking responsibility to do their part and to be accountable for their actions—a system of reciprocal accountability.

Exhibit 4

Framework for developing capacity



Where to begin implementing a process for developing capacity? A good starting point would be to conduct a self-assessment. The questions presented in the previous section can be applied to each of the six areas where capacity should be developed (see Appendix B). The questions are intentionally general so that they can be used by any group within the system —the ministry, school boards, district staff, schools, school planning councils, networks of teachers or any other educational organization. The results of the self-assessment can be used to determine areas that need the greatest focus. Using an appropriate level of context information and sufficiently exploring what skills and abilities within each capacity area need to be developed would then provide the support for doing so. And, because the process is all about learning, adequate reflection and integration of professional learning practices would feed the cycle for improvement.

How can this framework support efforts in the education system?

Change has always been an integral part of our public education system as new thoughts about teaching and learning have evolved. Over the past few years, however, people within the education system have been experiencing change on a greater scale and at a faster pace. Pressure to transform the education system and continually improve student results appears to be greater than ever before. Getting to that next level of achievement and sustaining improvement has become increasingly difficult to do. This has caused those within the system to think about the delivery and governance of education in new ways. In turn, this new thinking has generated new initiatives to be tested and implemented—and all of this has demanded enhanced levels of capacity of people within the system.

We believe that a focus on developing capacity through an ongoing process—as outlined in this framework—will support the many efforts currently underway in the province's education system and ultimately support the system's continued success and the success of British Columbia's students.

Three examples of how this framework can support efforts in the system are presented below.

1. Preparing accountability contracts

The requirement for school boards to prepare accountability contracts presents a prime example of how this framework can support the efforts of those within the system. The accountability contracts were introduced through legislative changes in the School Act in 2002. Each school board is to prepare an accountability contract that outlines the district's goals and strategies to improve student achievement. The goals and strategies within the contracts must be based on evidence, assessments and prioritization of local needs. Resources and structures required to support the strategies also need to be detailed and clearly aligned with goals. All of this is to be done in a collaborative way with teachers, parents, board staff and the local community.

Creating accountability contracts that encompass these elements and making them meaningful in terms of focusing everyone on the end result—improving student achievement—requires leadership, collaboration, review, planning, resourcing

and professional learning skills and abilities. If an accountability program is imposed on a system that lacks either the capacity to improve or the capacity to make meaningful connections between the process and the end goal, the program could become merely a paper exercise (Elmore 2002). A successful accountability program that actually focuses the system on the "particular end"—improving student achievement—must evolve from a critical mass of individual and collective capacity across the system for both implementing processes and achieving results. Ensuring that the skills and abilities to do this are being developed in an ongoing fashion places the education system in a better position to meet the intended outcome of the contracts and to manage changes in accountability demands in the future.

2. Conducting district reviews

The recently implemented District Review process is another element of the new accountability framework. Each district is subject to a review of its improvement progress along 10 points of inquiry: goals, rationale, data, strategies, structures, results, communication, teamwork (District and school, District and parents), and leadership. This review process exemplifies informal capacity development—through practice, or learning by doing. Through its implementation, people within the education system are becoming increasingly aware of the need to review and to do so effectively. Although the 10 points of inquiry parallel in many ways the "practising" of the skills and abilities within the frame-work, the process does not inquire specifically about how they are being developed or what progress is being made toward developing capacity. Incorporating review of how well districts are developing capacity—that is, with the framework we outline here—would not only enhance the process, but also help establish a more formal means for capacity development.

3. Creating new learning networks

Creating the impetus, motivation and climate for cultivating "action research networks," which are beginning to crop up throughout the province in professional learning communities, can also be supported through ongoing development of the areas of capacity within the framework. Action research initiatives involve bringing professionals together to identify and investigate new approaches to teaching and learning, through a process not dissimilar to scientific problem-solving. This approach requires the

skills and abilities to analyze data, define the problem or issue to be addressed, plan an approach to solving the problem, collect data, evaluate results and then reflect on the process—all with the end goal of finding new ways to improve student learning. However, the success of these endeavours relies heavily on the leadership, collaboration, review, planning and resourcing skills and abilities of the people undertaking such efforts.

There are many more examples of how developing these areas of capacity can help support the efforts of the education system as it strives to continually improve. And as we have discussed, there are numerous linkages to how they are key to managing change, managing for results and enhancing accountability and reporting. The main point is that developing capacity in an ongoing process of awareness, exploring, practising and reflecting is critical for sustaining results over the long term.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of key resources used

We drew our conclusions about the six key areas for capacity development and the four elements of the process for developing them from an extensive body of literature and research. We provide here a short list of key resources that helped us form our thinking. A complete listing of the references we used can be made available upon request.

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Appendix B: Guiding questions for self-assessment of capacity development efforts

Process / Capacity Area	Awareness	Exploring	Practising	Reflecting
	Recognition of the need to develop capacity is widespread and commitments are made to take action.	*A variety of information is used to inform planning and measurement of capacity development.*	*Plans or strategies to develop capacity are resourced, implemented, and tracked.*	*Results of implementing plans or strategies are reviewed and evaluated to gain new understanding.*
Leadership Collaboration Review Planning Resourcing Professional learning	1. Is there widespread recognition of the importance of developing capacity? 2. Have commitments been made to enhance capacity? 3. Have resources been committed to explore and create processes to support capacity development?	1. Are literature, evidence and information from reviews and the local environment used to inform what specific skills and abilities need to be developed? 2. Are assessments conducted to identify gaps in capacity and to determine what needs to be enhanced? 3. Have plans to develop capacity been created, or have strategies to enhance capacity been included in other plans? 4. Have measures to assess the effectiveness of plans or strategies been identified?	1. Have sufficient resources been allocated to implement plans or strategies to develop capacity? 2. Have the plans or strategies been implemented? 3. Is data being gathered to measure the effectiveness of the plans implemented? 4. Are staff collaboratively engaged in ongoing development of capacity?	1. Is data gathered to measure effectiveness of implemented strategies being critically analyzed? 2. Are results of capacity development efforts incorporated in results reporting? 3. Do review and dialogue of intended versus actual results of capacity development take place regularly? 4. Is new awareness of needs for developing capacity being created and used as a result of collaborative reflection?

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